

ATTITUDES OF AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION
MEMBERS TOWARDS UTILIZING PARAPROFESSIONALS
IN SCHOOL COUNSELING

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The principal investigator (PI) for this study surveyed 207 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) members on their attitudes toward utilizing trained counseling paraprofessionals in school counseling. The PI also examined the relationship between participants' attitudes and their subjective reports of the counselor-student ratios in their schools, the amount of work time they spent providing direct counseling services to students, and the extent to which their districts experienced a school counselor shortage.

The participants' mean reported counselor-student ratio (1:464.63) significantly exceeded ASCA recommendations of 1:250. Elementary counselors reported the highest counselor-student ratios while high school counselors reported the lowest. Furthermore the PI found a significant linear trend for counselor-student ratios to decrease as school level increased.

The participants' reported mean percentage of time involved in direct counseling services (61.48%) fell significantly below the ASCA recommended 70%. Elementary counselors reported the highest amount of time involved in direct counseling services while high school counselors reported the lowest. The PI also found a significant linear trend for percentages of time involved in direct services to decrease as school level

increased. Over one-fourth of the participants indicated school counselor shortages existed in their districts.

A majority of participants supported utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in their schools. The PI found a significant negative correlation between support for counseling paraprofessionals and percentage of time involved in direct services. Participants reporting the lowest percentage of time providing direct services to students thus expressed the strongest endorsement for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals. Participants most strongly endorsed assigning clerical duties to counseling paraprofessionals. They likewise endorsed assigning some indirect helping duties to counseling paraprofessionals. However, participants strongly opposed assigning direct counseling duties to counseling paraprofessionals.

Based on the results of the study the PI developed recommendations for school counselors, school administrators, state education agencies, and institutions of higher learning regarding the training, education, and job duties of counseling paraprofessionals.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

School counselors at the beginning of the 21st century face a multitude of challenges in a profession growing and evolving in increasingly complex directions (Murray, 1995; Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Significant concerns of school counseling professionals today include high counselor-student ratios and the diminished time available for providing direct counseling and guidance services to students (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). Along with elevated counselor-student ratios, non-counseling duties assigned to school counselors frequently interfere with implementing guidance programs and counseling for students (Baker, 1996).

Top priorities for school counselors today include preventing school violence (Dykeman, Daehlin, Doyle, & Flamer, 1996), substance abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide (Sears, 1993), and school drop-out (Baker, 1996). In addition, school counselors plan and implement classroom guidance, provide individual and group counseling to students, help plan post-secondary education, develop career workshops, and promote lifetime career planning (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). Moreover, school counselors increasingly involve themselves in the lives of their students' families by helping parents learn parenting skills, conducting parenting groups, and involving family members in the counseling of at-risk students (Sears, 1993).

While research underscores the effectiveness and necessity of school counseling and guidance (Borders & Drury, 1992; Whiston & Sexton, 1998), school counselors often must strategically balance their time between actual counseling and guidance with students and numerous non-counseling duties assigned to them. Wilgus and Shelley (1988) indicated that the second highest amount of time spent by school counselors involved non-counseling duties including lunch supervision, bus duty, hall duty, recess duty, extracurricular activities, administrative duties, and substituting for absent teachers. Other typically assigned school counselor duties not related to counseling include administering achievement tests, scheduling and registering students, dealing with tardy and absent students, disciplining students, supervising study halls and detention, and assisting with various duties of the principal's office (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). Ultimately such role confusion perpetuates the non-counseling functions administrators assign to school counselors (Murray, 1995).

Many articles in the school counseling literature address time management strategies and time saving suggestions for school counselors (Eddy, Richardson, & Allberg, 1982; Fairchild, 1986; Fairchild & Seeley, 1994; Fairchild & Seeley, 1995; Kareck, 1998; Partin, 1983; Partin, 1993; Wilkinson, 1988). This trend underscores the task overload status of school counselors and the dearth of available time for school counselors to spend working with students. Consequently, school counselor stress and burnout represent serious concerns for the school counseling profession (Moracco, Butcke, & McEwen, 1984).

As the list of non-counseling tasks delegated to school counselors increases, the amount of time devoted to counseling students suffers. Studies (Astramovich, 1999; Partin, 1993; Wilgus & Shelley, 1988) have indicated school counselors generally spend only about 50% of their time in direct guidance and counseling contact with students. A study by West, Kayser, Overton, and Saltmarsh (1991) indicated that one of the top reasons students fail to seek out the school counselor for help is due to the perception that the counselor did not have time available to see them.

Gysbers and Henderson (1994) studied ideal percentages of work time for elementary, middle, and high school counselors. They configured the work of school counseling into four areas of effective comprehensive guidance programs. The guidance curriculum serves as the primary focus and includes a planned curriculum of primarily classroom and group guidance activities addressing developmentally appropriate topics. Individual planning involves activities on an individual or group basis designed to meet the specific personal, educational, and career needs of students. Responsive services include those interventions focused on providing special help to students coping with problems in personal, social, academic, and career development. Finally, system support includes all necessary management activities involved in implementing the comprehensive guidance program as well as other professional activities including budgeting, research, and community relations.

At the elementary level, Gysbers and Henderson (1994) recommended counselors spend 40% of their time in guidance, 25% in individual planning, 25% in responsive service, and 10% in system support. For middle school counselors the recommendations

included spending 30% of their time in guidance, 30% in individual planning, 25% in responsive service, and 15% in system support. At the high school level, the recommended breakdown of counselors' time included 25% of their time in guidance, 30% in individual planning, 30% in responsive services, and 15% in system support.

While time management suggestions for school counselors are abundant, an equally cogent yet often underrepresented concern of school counselors involves counselor-student ratios that frequently exceed recommended levels. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (1999a) suggested that the ideal counselor-student ratio was one counselor per 250 students. By contrast, Moles (1991) found that high school counselor-student ratios nationwide averaged one counselor to 350 students. Henderson (1997) reported initial counselor-student ratios of one counselor to 550 students at the Northside Independent School District in Texas, prior to a redesign of the district's counseling and guidance programs in the mid 1980s. In a pilot study of Texas school counselors, Agramovich (1999) reported an average counselor-student ratio of one counselor per 428 students. In 1999 a proposed amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 cited the current nationwide counselor-student ratio at one counselor per 513 students (S. 1443, 1999). Furthermore, Borders and Drury (1992) highlighted research suggesting counselor availability to counsel with students depends upon counselor-student ratios.

Some state legislatures have recognized the need for school counselors to spend more time involved in direct counseling and guidance activities with students (Snyder & Daly, 1993). However, state legislative action typically mandated only specific time

management structures upon counseling programs and consequently overlooked the problems associated with elevated counselor-student ratios. In Florida, for example, state legislators mandated in 1987 that school counselors spend at least 75 percent of their work time directly involved in counseling and guidance with students (Snyder, 1987). Other states have also mandated similar time structures for school counselors (Murray, 1995). While these legislative initiatives helped restructure the focus of school counseling programs and pressured administrators to relieve counselors of non-counseling duties, ultimately they failed to address the actual student-counselor ratios crucial to implementing a successful comprehensive guidance program (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994).

One possible solution to high counselor-student ratios and assignment of non-counseling tasks to counselors involves utilizing paraprofessionals in school counseling programs (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971; Zimpfer, 1974b). Paraprofessionals comprise those non-certified personnel trained to work in schools under the supervision of a degreed and certified education professional (Shank & McElroy, 1970). Traditionally, paraprofessionals helped ease the overloaded work conditions of educators, especially during times of teacher shortages (Leighton, O'Brien, Eagle, Weiner, Wimberly, & Youngs, 1997). Similarly, employing paraprofessionals in school counseling may ease the demands placed on today's school counselors and consequently increase the available time they spend in actual counseling and guidance activities with students (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971). Trained counseling paraprofessionals could assist school counselors in a wide variety of duties including clerical tasks, information gathering, individual and

group interviewing, small group discussions, maintaining student records, proctoring group tests, assisting counselors with group guidance activities, maintaining audio-visual equipment, and maintaining information on career resources (American Personnel and Guidance Association [APGA], 1971; American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 1999b).

Statement of the Problem

School counselors face growing demands and job related tasks not specific to their formal training and professional role as a counselor (Murray, 1995). Such role confusion exacerbates already compromised school counselor workloads. As a result, school counselors must often make choices about managing their time in ways that jeopardize the goals of counseling and guidance programs.

One approach for reducing school counselors' workloads and providing appropriate school counseling services to students involves utilizing paraprofessionals trained specifically in the duties and procedures of the school counseling and guidance program (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971; Zimpfer, 1974b). Counseling paraprofessionals could provide a means for reducing the non-counseling related duties of the school counselor (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971; Carlson, Cavins, & Dinkmeyer, 1974). In turn, school counselors would have more time to spend in developing and implementing guidance and counseling programs with students.

School counselors holding positive attitudes toward counseling paraprofessionals are most likely utilize them effectively in counseling and guidance programs. Zimpfer (1974a) conducted the only national survey of school counselors' attitudes toward

paraprofessionals in 1968. A current assessment of school counselor's attitudes towards counseling paraprofessionals may therefore clarify present support levels and identify advocated job duties.

Review of Literature

The Background of Paraprofessionals in Education

In the 1940s, the National Youth Administration implemented a program to train school dropouts and at-risk youth for nonprofessional jobs in the human services. A precursor of the paraprofessional movement, this program trained individuals for positions as laboratory assistants, clerical workers, library aides, and similar nonprofessional jobs within health, welfare, corrections, and education (Beach, 1973). The program, however, failed to generate enough support for its maintenance and ended by 1943.

The use of paraprofessionals in education officially began during the late 1940s and early 1950s with a landmark study examining the effects of using teacher aides (Coppock & Templeton, 1974). Utilizing funding from the Ford Foundation, Bay City, Michigan schools experimentally paired uncertified aides with professionally certified teachers as a method of coping with an ongoing shortage of professionally certified teachers (Brighton, 1972). The study examined the impact on student achievement when paraprofessional teachers helped relieve certified teachers of clerical duties. After two years, the research indicated that the employment of teacher paraprofessionals did not correlate with increased scholastic achievement. However, and perhaps more importantly, parents and students affirmed the role of the paraprofessional (Pearl, 1977).

As the Bay City, Michigan paraprofessional program gained recognition, other similar programs developed in Fairfield, Connecticut, and in Rutgers, New Jersey. Eventually higher education entered into experimentation with paraprofessionals, and Berkley began a training program in the early 1960s that placed college students as aides into schools located in economically disadvantaged areas. The Berkley program placed its students directly into the classroom as trained teachers' aides (Beach, 1973).

During the teacher shortages of the 1950s, paraprofessionals, then called aides or assistants, helped fill a need for school instructional personnel. However, the early use of paraprofessionals was seen only as a temporary measure to fill critical school vacancies (Teare, 1978). Despite this, the paraprofessional movement continued developing during the 1960s, especially in conjunction with anti-poverty programs sponsored by the federal government (Gartner, Riessman, & Jackson, 1977). In particular, the Education Professions Development Act (EPDA) in the late 1960s helped create school and community college partnerships geared toward training paraprofessional personnel (Davies, 1977).

Other important legislation supporting the training and employment of paraprofessionals included the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1964, and the Vocational Educational Act of 1963 (Pearl, 1977). Of particular importance, Title I of ESEA specifically provided funding for the use of paraprofessionals and the development of training programs based upon the successes of the pioneering projects in Michigan, Connecticut, and New Jersey, and at

Berkley in California (Beach, 1973). Since the enactment of ESEA, paraprofessionals have become essential personnel in many Title I programs (Leighton et al., 1997).

Two other pieces of federal legislation, specifically the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and the Education of the Handicapped Act of 1974, created additional jobs for paraprofessionals (Leighton et al., 1997). In special education, for example, paraprofessionals performed unique educational tasks for children with mental retardation, auditory deficits, vision loss, learning disabilities, and physical handicaps (Fafard, El-Mohammed, Gartner, & Schachter, 1977). Beyond merely clerical duties, paraprofessionals assisted in the spectrum of instructional and related educational services for students with special needs. Further special education legislation, most recently the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, helped reaffirm the role of paraprofessionals in special education (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1997).

The Federal Office of Economic Opportunity sponsored numerous paraprofessional programs during the 1960s and developed a network of higher education institutions to serve as training facilities and coordinators of paraprofessional programs (Klopf & Bowman, 1975). Researchers studying programs sponsored by the Office of Economic Opportunity in the late 1960s concluded that the utilization of paraprofessionals did allow teachers to spend more time in direct contact and instruction with students (Beach, 1973). Another researcher (Mark, 1975) in the early 1970s found that schools nationwide regularly employed paraprofessionals. Despite the cutbacks in education funding and shrinkage in the job market for teachers and aides during the

1970s, paraprofessional positions in education remained in tact (Klopff & Bowman, 1975). Federal legislation and initiatives thus established the groundwork necessary for making paraprofessionals a mainstay in education (Gartner et al., 1977). By the early 1970s, paraprofessionals were the fastest growing group of employees within United States education (Beach, 1973; Mark, 1975).

Roles and Training of Paraprofessionals

In the primary and secondary school settings, paraprofessionals have served in a variety of support positions. As the paraprofessional movement progressed in the 1960s, duties assigned to paraprofessionals expanded beyond merely clerical and menial tasks (Brighton, 1972). Among the roles paraprofessionals assumed in the public school setting included assistant counselors, bilingual aides, bilingual special education aides, career aides, child care givers, computer aides, extracurricular activity aides, financial aid specialists, monitors, library aides, media center aides, psychologist assistants, teaching aides, teaching assistants, and tutors (Leighton et al., 1997).

In addition to their diverse roles in primary and secondary schools, paraprofessionals also obtained a variety of positions in higher education during the 1960s. At colleges and universities, paraprofessionals helped relieve workloads in many student services areas including housing, counseling, orientation, academic assistance, student groups, and research (Delworth & Brown, 1977). The unique contributions of paraprofessionals on college campuses included expanding existing student services, establishing a close alliance with students, and drawing on special skills and expertise that student services professionals may not have possessed, including an intimate

understanding of student needs and concerns (Delworth & Brown, 1977; Pyle & Snyder, 1974).

At the college level, paraprofessionals often were drawn from the student population and consisted of specially trained peers. Similar to the use of paraprofessionals in the primary and secondary schools, college paraprofessionals helped provide an essential link between students and the professional employees in instruction and administration (Pyle & Snyder, 1974). College administrators endorsed many duties of paraprofessionals including counseling students with adjustment concerns, tutoring, orienting freshmen to campus life, telephone crisis support, and helping students with academic problems (Delworth & Brown, 1977).

As the use of paraprofessionals in educational settings grew rapidly in the 1960s, role and professional identity confusion contributed to a wide range of paraprofessional job tasks. Some researchers emphasized the non-technical and clerical nature of paraprofessional tasks (Patterson, 1965), while others (Carkhuff, 1968; Truax, 1974) indicated that paraprofessionals could be used for numerous higher level tasks. Zimpfer (1974b) helped consolidate the array of paraprofessional duties by developing a four-level model of paraprofessional duties with each level building on more complex tasks and functions. Level one paraprofessionals generally perform object-oriented tasks requiring little skill and virtually no social interaction. Examples of level one duties include posting data on records, assembling packages, transporting files to other departments and other primarily clerical and custodial functions. Level two paraprofessionals are involved in more technically oriented tasks but still have minimal

people contact. Examples of level two paraprofessional duties include compiling reports and records, numerical tabulations of data, writing bulletins and performing more complex written tasks. At the third level, paraprofessionals engage in contact with people as part of their routine duties. At this higher level, paraprofessional tasks may include structured interviews, intake coordination, home visits, orientation sessions, and leading group discussions on predetermined topics. The fourth, and most advanced, level of paraprofessional duties includes tasks such as teaching, counseling, evaluation, and other highly person-oriented activities (Zimpfer, 1974b).

Similar to the wide scope of paraprofessional work roles, the preparation and training of education paraprofessionals has also varied substantially. Shank and McElroy (1970) described three typical methods public schools used in the training of paraprofessionals. The first approach utilized an on-the-job training focus where the paraprofessional began working on a trial basis with help from teachers, administrators, and other experienced paraprofessionals. A second method of paraprofessional training utilized a series of two or three day pre-service training workshops directed by a school district administrator. A third training method for paraprofessionals involved an intensive two or three weeklong training seminar frequently sponsored by a local college or university. While some paraprofessional training methods emphasized a site-based training model with quick exposure to the job, other paraprofessional training models emphasized adult learning theory, gradual exposure, and the use of a structured paraprofessional curriculum (Austin, 1978). The American Personnel and Guidance Association (1967) indicated that the training of paraprofessionals should ordinarily be

brief in comparison to the training of the counselor. In addition, paraprofessional training should be concrete and specific, based on practical concepts rather than theories. The use of field placements and on-the-job settings for training paraprofessionals was highly encouraged (APGA, 1967).

Career Development of Paraprofessionals

The paraprofessional movement substantially challenged the traditional education personnel structure that emphasized professional positions requiring, at a minimum, four-year degrees and professional certification (Davies, 1977). The creation of paraprofessional positions thus provided a means for economically disadvantaged and unemployed individuals to obtain positions and develop careers in the areas of education and human services (Gartner et al., 1977). Of particular importance is the impact that paraprofessionals have had in bridging the gap between degreed professionals and the community at large. Paraprofessionals often represent economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority populations (Pearl, 1977). Consequently, paraprofessionals were often relied upon to provide insight and resources in the school's relationship with the community. The paraprofessional training component of the Education Professions Development Act ultimately helped diversify the field of education and implement new career patterns (Davies, 1977).

The emphasis on career development represented a primary component of the paraprofessional movement. In 1966, the New Careers Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act created programs and funding aimed at creating new career paths for the economically disadvantaged (Davies, 1977). By 1969 the comprehensive Career

Opportunities Program developed from the initiative of the Education Professions Development Act. Specifically, the Career Opportunities Program emphasized increasing the self and group identities of economically disadvantaged and minority children. It implemented training programs that encouraged diversification of school staff nationwide and the development of collaborative programs among paraprofessionals, schools, colleges, and the community (Carter, 1977).

The paraprofessional movement was part of a national trend in the 1960s to create career ladders and career lattices for the economically disadvantaged. The career lattice concept emphasized that paraprofessionals in education and human services should be trained with generalizable skills allowing for career movement horizontally to other similar positions as well as for career movement vertically into more advanced positions with greater levels of responsibility (Zimpfer, 1974b). One example, the New Careers program (Pearl & Riessman, 1965) specifically attempted to develop a career path in education for economically disadvantaged individuals. The New Careers approach emphasized building upon the life experiences, interests, and cultural background of new paraprofessionals (Davies, 1977). In order to attract individuals to paraprofessional positions, the New Careers program developed a career lattice that specifically detailed opportunities for paraprofessionals to obtain further training, education, and professional credentials. Instead of dead-end jobs, paraprofessional positions were touted as a pathway to advanced degrees and certifications for those interested in pursuing higher education (Pearl & Riessman, 1965).

The New Careers program emphasized the upward mobility of paraprofessionals. However, a study of the educational level of paraprofessionals in the early 1970s (Mark, 1975) indicated that only 11 percent of paraprofessionals employed in schools had completed one year of college, and just eight percent had completed two years of college coursework. The New Careers program was eventually heavily criticized by one of its original founders, Arthur Pearl (1977), for not following through on creating viable career paths for paraprofessionals. Ultimately Pearl (1977) believed that paraprofessionals were, unfortunately, “assigned to mentally stultifying tasks, manipulated and used to pacify or control dissident students, and asked to function as an undercover agent for an oppressive administration” (p. 232). To counter this negative image of paraprofessionals, Pearl (1977) emphasized that paraprofessionals must obtain higher levels of education in order to demonstrate and model critical and abstract thinking abilities. In turn, paraprofessionals would come to be viewed as vital school personnel.

Current Status of Paraprofessionals in Education

Although the utilization of paraprofessionals was substantially downsized during the 1970s, the use of paraprofessionals in education remains active in schools today (Leighton et al., 1997). The U. S. Department of Education projected in 1997 that the demand for paraprofessionals would grow as new provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act led to programs involving parents in education (Leighton et al., 1997). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 also acknowledged the utilization of trained paraprofessionals within special education

(IDEA, 1997). The National Center for Education Statistics (1998) reported that over half a million paraprofessionals were employed in United States elementary and secondary public schools in 1996.

In summary, the 1960s witnessed a dramatic rise in the training and employment of paraprofessionals in education. By the middle 1970s, however, the initial paraprofessional movement started losing momentum. As federal education funding decreased and the number of certified teachers exceeded the available positions, the interest in employing paraprofessionals declined (Pearl, 1977). Nonetheless, paraprofessionals continue to represent a substantial portion of the personnel in education today (NCES, 1998).

Paraprofessionals in Counseling

Critical shortages of school counselors in the 1960s spurred the introduction of paraprofessionals into counseling (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971). Many factors contributed to the growing need for school counselors. The National Defense of Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, enacted after the Russian technological success of the Sputnik satellite launch of 1957, established priorities to identify and encourage academically successful students to pursue careers in science (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). Consequently, a main component of the NDEA involved significantly increasing the number of counselors in the nations schools in order to promote academic excellence and career development in critical fields (Baker, 1996). Federal funding for school counselors increased, leading to increased enrollments in counselor education programs. Meanwhile the American School Counselor Association conducted a study in 1957 investigating the

need for elementary school counselors to serve the growing enrollment in the nation's schools resulting from the baby boom after World War II (Baker, 1996).

As school counselor positions were substantially increased nationwide, counselor-student ratios dropped from one counselor per 2400 students in 1950 to one counselor per 934 students in 1959 (NCES, 1998). Although counselor-student ratios had improved, Conant (1959) recommended the ideal high school counselor-student ratio consisted of one counselor per 200 to 300 students. The introduction of guidance and counseling paraprofessionals into schools was thus an attempt to supplement the complex tasks and heavy caseloads required of school counselors (Zimpfer, 1974b).

Roles of Counseling Paraprofessionals

The American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) developed a policy statement in 1966 to address the growing use of paraprofessionals in counseling and human services (APGA, 1967). This statement provided a broad outline of duties and training suggestions for paraprofessionals within counseling, guidance, and personnel services. Direct helping duties endorsed by APGA for counseling paraprofessionals included individual interviewing, utilizing structured interviews to obtain specific information, explaining the purposes and procedures involved in counseling, helping put clients at ease by means of casual discussions, leading structured groups on predetermined topics, and providing resources and information to former counselees. Indirect helping duties of paraprofessionals endorsed by APGA included administering, proctoring, and scoring standardized tests, preparing reports, operating technical media,

maintaining records, ordering supplies for the counselor, and initiating and maintaining referral contacts with outside agencies.

The policy statement by APGA also clearly differentiated the roles of the primary school counselor and counseling paraprofessional staff. Thus, the counselor provided actual counseling services while the paraprofessional performed tasks and functions that contributed to the overall guidance program. In addition, while the paraprofessional worked on specific, discrete tasks under the direction of the counselor, a primary function of the counselor involved synthesizing and integrating the various parts into a unified program of counseling services (APGA, 1967).

The American School Counselor Association also responded to the growing use of paraprofessionals in school counseling offices by publishing its own position statement specifically clarifying the appropriate functions and duties of school counseling paraprofessionals. After a series of revisions since its original 1974 publication, the 1999 ASCA position statement emphasized the clerical role and resource functions of counseling paraprofessionals (ASCA, 1999b). Suggested clerical tasks of counseling paraprofessionals included collecting and maintaining files, duplicating materials, assisting with student record keeping, monitoring group tests, and preparing and organizing answer sheets for scoring group tests. Suggested resource tasks of counseling paraprofessionals included establishing and maintaining connections with outside agencies and organizations, cataloguing and filing educational, occupational, avocational, and personal student materials, assisting the counselor with various tasks within the

guidance program, operating technological equipment, and collecting and analyzing data (ASCA, 1999b).

Jones and Cox (1970) surveyed 128 chairpersons of counselor education programs regarding suggested job functions of counseling paraprofessionals. Among the counselor paraprofessional functions endorsed by more than fifty percent of the sample included assisting in research (96.5%), information-gathering and processing (95.5%), group test administration and scoring (94.7%), secretarial tasks (93.4%), routine follow-up of counselees (91.6%), scheduling (87.0%), information resource for students and parents (77.3%), fact-finding interviewing (75.6%), job placement (74.9%), and orientation (74.7%). Job functions receiving less than a fifty percent endorsement by the sample included providing teachers with information about pupils (48.1%), referral to outside agencies (42.2%), parent conferences (36.9%), test interpretation (34.7%), group counseling (27.4%), administering individual intelligence tests (25.8%), and the lowest endorsement, individual counseling (25.4%). The Jones and Cox study (1970) demonstrated that heads of counselor education programs substantially agreed on the suggested job duties of counseling paraprofessionals. Only two functions, job placement and referral to outside agencies, represented areas of disagreement by the sample about the role of the counselor paraprofessional. The survey highlighted differences between the APGA role statement that endorsed counseling paraprofessionals making referrals to outside agencies and the lack of consensus between chairs of counselor education programs on this job function. Jones and Cox (1970) also emphasized that the training

and supervision of counseling paraprofessionals should rest with counselor education programs.

Carlson and Pietrofesa (1971) proposed a three level structure for school counseling programs that would create specific roles for counselors and roles for two distinct levels of counseling support personnel. The three level structure specifically assigned all non-counseling duties to guidance workers and paraprofessionals. The Carlson and Pietrofesa (1971) model developed a team approach to counseling and guidance, allowing for a breakdown of tasks and roles according to the level of training and expertise of the individual team member. According to this model, the counselor functions as the team coordinator and provides direct assistance to students through direct individual and group counseling and guidance activities. The counselor also consults with parents, teachers, and other school staff members. Qualifications for counselors would include a master's degree in counseling along with supervised counseling experience. The guidance worker would work with students in a variety of ways including delivering classroom guidance presentations, leading small, structured group discussions on a pre-designated topic, and conducting information gathering interviews for the counselor. Qualifications for guidance workers would include a bachelors degree and some graduate work or on-the-job training. Training for guidance workers would emphasize guidance approaches instead of counseling. The last member of the counseling and guidance team, the paraprofessional, would serve students indirectly, performing tasks such as distributing standardized tests to teachers, proctoring standardized tests, collecting and recording data in cumulative folders, and other counseling related clerical duties.

Qualifications for paraprofessionals would include a high school diploma and on-the-job training. Carlson and Pietrofesa (1971) argued that their three level model would more effectively provide comprehensive guidance and counseling services to students than the single counselor staffing approach often used in schools.

An experimental program utilizing counselor paraprofessionals was initiated in 1969 at an elementary school in Deerfield, Illinois (Carlson, Cavins, & Dinkmeyer, 1974). The Deerfield Project utilized grant funding from Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and established a counseling paraprofessional training program. Qualifications for employment as a counselor paraprofessional included a bachelor's degree and three graduate level preparation courses taken during a one year period of on-the-job training. Working under the direct supervision of an elementary school counselor, paraprofessionals assisted with group observations, data gathering, small group discussions, classroom guidance, and work with special needs students. Primary goals of the project included extending services to elementary school children and providing trained individuals to fill personnel shortages in counseling (Carlson, Cavins, & Dinkmeyer, 1974).

Criticism of Counseling Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals often encountered resistance from practicing professionals during initial implementation of paraprofessional programs. In fact, professionals frequently hesitated to utilize paraprofessionals for anything except mundane and repetitive job tasks (Jaques, 1974). Researchers and scholars likewise debated the introduction of paraprofessionals into the workforce. Specifically in counseling, Odgers

(1964) argued that the standards of counseling would be compromised if paraprofessionals were used in an expanded school counseling program. Gust (1968) argued that role confusion would blur the distinction between the functions of the counselor and the paraprofessional. Patterson (1965) echoed this sentiment with his desire to limit support personnel to non-counseling, clerical tasks.

Other criticisms regarding the use of paraprofessionals in counseling centered around the negative impact it might have on student needs, uncertainty about the degree of paraprofessional training, and the impact of paraprofessional tasks upon the job duties of the counselor (Carson, 1973). Zimpfer (1974b) hypothesized that resistance to paraprofessionals in school counseling resulted from closed attitudes by those counseling professionals absorbed in promoting their status and expertise while distancing themselves from less trained individuals.

Research on Counseling Paraprofessionals

Efficacy research.

A few important studies have highlighted the effectiveness of utilizing counseling paraprofessionals. Truax and Lister (1970) reported positive client outcomes when paraprofessionals participated in the counselor's caseload. On the other hand, poor client outcomes coincided with paraprofessionals utilized solely in non-counseling activities (Truax & Lister, 1970).

Later studies supported the positive results obtained by Truax and Lister (1970). A study by Clavelle and Turner (1980) found that as paraprofessionals gained experience their clinical confidence level and decision making ability closely resembled that of

counseling professionals. Another study (Shelton & Peterson, 1978) comparing the effectiveness of paraprofessionals versus doctoral level professionals found comparable performance between both professionals and paraprofessionals in the use of systematic desensitization with clients. A study (Bazeli, 1974) of counseling paraprofessionals in Detroit Public Schools also highlighted the successful use of paraprofessionals in numerous clerical tasks.

Zimpfer's (1974a) ASCA study.

In response to the growing utilization and study of counseling paraprofessionals, Zimpfer (1974a) surveyed a sample of 435 American School Counselor Association members to assess their attitudes toward introducing paraprofessionals into school counseling. Based upon the APGA (1969) role statement regarding counseling paraprofessionals, the survey examined attitudes of the sample toward the specific job duties of counseling paraprofessionals. Zimpfer (1974a) reported that 87% of the ASCA sample supported the use of paraprofessionals in school counseling. The highest endorsement of job duties centered on indirect helping tasks including information gathering and processing, placement follow-up, and program management. Other paraprofessional job functions strongly supported by the ASCA sample involved audio-visual operations, obtaining and maintaining information of the world of work, obtaining and preparing supplies, and contacting sources for records. The least endorsed paraprofessional job functions included making student referrals to outside agencies and leading group discussions. Zimpfer (1974a) also reported that the sample supported the

supervision of counseling paraprofessionals by the school counselor rather than a school administrator.

Based on the ASCA survey results, Zimpfer (1974a) concluded that school counselors highly supported the utilization of counseling paraprofessionals. However, Zimpfer noticed a trend toward endorsing paraprofessionals exclusively in non-collaborative roles that required minimal people contact. Consequently, he cautioned against dichotomized roles that would deny paraprofessionals the direct people contact that often had drawn them to the position in the first place (1974a).

Astramovich's (1999) Pilot Study.

At the 1999 Texas Counseling Association annual conference in Corpus Christi, Texas, 21 school counselors completed a pilot version of the survey developed for this study (Astramovich, 1999). Survey participants responded to questions about their attitudes toward using a counseling paraprofessional at their own school. In addition, they provided information about the percentage of time that they spent in direct counseling and guidance services with their students.

The pilot survey sample consisted of 8 (38.1%) elementary school, 3 (14.3%) middle school, and 10 (47.6%) high school counselors from throughout the state of Texas. Nine (42.9%) worked in suburban school districts, 9 (42.9%) worked in rural school districts, and 3 (14.3%) worked in urban school districts. The sample consisted of 17 (81%) female counselors and 4 (19%) male counselors. The mean age was 40.8 years, and the mean years of school counseling experience was 8.57.

The mean percentage of work time spent in direct counseling and guidance activities with students reported by the sample was 52.16%. The average student enrollment in the sample respondents' schools was 927.10 students, with the average number of counselors at 2.45. The average counselor to student ratio reported by the sample was one counselor per 428 students.

Astramovich (1999) found strong support among the pilot survey participants for the use of school counselor paraprofessionals. Of the surveyed school counselors, 18 (85.7%) strongly agreed that a counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at their school, two (9.5%) agreed, and one (4.5%) strongly disagreed. In response to whether a counseling paraprofessional would allow the school counselor more time to spend in direct counseling and guidance with students, 19 (90.5%) strongly agreed, one (4.8%) agreed, and one (4.8%) strongly disagreed. Regarding the specific level where counseling paraprofessionals were needed, 18 (85.7%) strongly agreed that counseling paraprofessionals were needed in high schools, 13 (61.9%) strongly agreed that counseling paraprofessionals were needed in middle schools, and 10 (47.6%) strongly agreed that counseling paraprofessionals were needed in elementary schools.

Purpose of the Study

Prior researchers documented the success of paraprofessionals in guidance and counseling related tasks (Clavelle & Turner, 1980; Shelton & Peterson, 1978; Truax and Lister, 1970). Astramovich (1999) and Zimpfer (1974a) discovered high levels of support for paraprofessionals by practicing school counselors. Larsen, Granello, & Sears (2000) reported slight school counselor shortages in five Midwestern states while the American

Counseling Association (1999) cited similar school counselor shortages nationwide. The school counseling literature however contained no precedence for demonstrating a significant level of counselor shortages. Therefore the principal investigator (PI) for this study considered a report of school counselor shortages by greater than 25% of participants as significant.

In light of reported school counselor shortages (ACA, 1999; Larsen, Granello, & Sears, 2000) and the current counselor student ratio averaging one counselor per 513 students (S. 1443, 1999), it follows that, as in the case of the school counselor shortages of the 1960s (Carlson & Pietrofesa, 1971), utilizing counseling paraprofessionals may help ease the heavy workloads of current school counselors. The last national survey of attitudes toward counselor paraprofessionals, however, occurred with Zimpfer's (1974a) study in 1969. A current national survey of school counselors on utilizing paraprofessionals in counseling thus appeared warranted.

The PI for this study utilized a mail survey to reexamine the attitude of a sample of ASCA members toward employing trained counseling paraprofessionals in the school counseling office. He also examined the relationship between participants attitudes and their subjective reports of the counselor-student ratios in their schools, the amount of work time they spent providing direct counseling services to students, and the extent to which their districts experienced a school counselor shortage.

CHAPTER TWO

PROCEDURES

Research Questions

This study specifically explored six research questions:

1. What are the current counselor-student ratios in American School Counselor Association (ASCA) members' schools?
2. To what extent do ASCA members report a shortage of school counselors in their school districts?
3. What percentage of time do members of ASCA report spending in direct school counseling and guidance contact with students?
4. What are the attitudes of ASCA members toward utilizing a trained paraprofessional in the school counseling office?
5. What relationships exist between ASCA members' level of support for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals, their reported counselor-student ratios, their percentages of time spent in direct guidance and counseling, and reported shortages of school counselors?
6. What duties for counselor paraprofessionals do ASCA members endorse?

Hypotheses and Statistical Analyses

The principal investigator (PI) developed the following hypotheses and recommended statistical analyses based upon the research questions and the review of literature.

Hypothesis 1: Participants' reported counselor-student ratios will exceed the ASCA recommendation of one counselor per 250 students. Statistical procedures: Descriptive statistics and use of a one-sample t test.

Hypothesis 2: At least 25% of participants will indicate a shortage of counselors in their school district. Statistical procedure: Descriptive statistics.

Hypothesis 3: Participants' reported percentages of time spent daily in actual counseling and guidance activities with students will be below the ASCA recommended 70%. Statistical procedures: Descriptive statistics and use of a one-sample t test.

Hypothesis 4: Participants' reports will show no difference between elementary, middle, and high school counselors' percentages of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students. Statistical procedure: One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Hypothesis 5: Participants' reports will show no difference between urban, suburban, and rural school counselors' percentages of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students. Statistical procedure: One-way ANOVA.

Hypothesis 6: Participants' reports will show no difference between elementary, middle, and high school counselor-student ratios. Statistical procedure: One-way ANOVA.

Hypothesis 7: Participants' reports will show no difference between urban, suburban, and rural schools' counselor-student ratios. Statistical procedure: One-way ANOVA.

Hypothesis 8: A majority of participants will support the use of counselor paraprofessionals in their schools. Statistical procedure: Descriptive statistics.

Hypothesis 9: Participants' reported time spent in direct counseling and guidance will negatively correlate with their reported attitudes toward the usefulness of a counseling paraprofessional in their school. Statistical procedure: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Hypothesis 10: Participants' reported counselor-student ratios will positively correlate with their responses to usefulness of a counselor paraprofessional in their school. Statistical procedure: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Hypothesis 11: A majority of participants will endorse clerical tasks for counselor paraprofessionals. Statistical procedure: Descriptive statistics.

Hypothesis 12: A majority of participants will endorse indirect helping tasks for counselor paraprofessionals. Statistical procedure: Descriptive statistics.

Hypothesis 13: A majority of participants will not endorse direct counseling and guidance tasks for counselor paraprofessionals. Statistical procedure: Descriptive statistics.

Definition of Terms

Classroom guidance refers to a wide scope of psychoeducational classroom presentations focused on developmental needs, prevention, and coping skills.

Clerical tasks refers to those non-counseling, object-oriented tasks required within the duties of the school counseling position including data collection, record management, and filing.

Counselor-student ratio refers to the average number of counselors per student and is calculated by dividing the number of student school population by the number of school counselors.

School counseling and guidance refers to a variety of student-focused school counselor functions including individual counseling, group counseling, classroom guidance presentations, and responsive services.

School counseling paraprofessional refers to a school employee specially trained to assist the school counselor in a wide variety of tasks.

School counselor refers to an employee of a school district with a master's degree in counseling or guidance who provides counseling and guidance services to students.

Sampling and Data Collection

The PI drew survey participants from a systematic random sample (Rea & Parker, 1997) of the American School Counselors Association 1999-2000 Membership Directory (ASCA, 1999a). He stratified the sample by state to maximize obtaining a representative national sample of ASCA members. From the current ASCA membership of approximately 12,000 members (ASCA, 1999a), he drew a sample of 600 members, representing about 5% of the current membership.

Rea and Parker (1997) cited low response rates as a major limitation of mail surveys. To increase the return rate of this survey, the PI entered respondents into a

drawing for a Digital Video Disc (DVD) player. The PI asked participants to provide an e-mail and postal mail address for winner notification purposes on an entry card separate from their completed survey. He separated all surveys and entry cards upon receipt, with no means to later match surveys with entry cards. The PI guaranteed confidentiality of all survey answers, and surveys obtained no personal identifying data.

The PI mailed the survey to the 600 randomly selected ASCA members along with an introductory letter, an entry card for the DVD player drawing, and a self addressed stamped envelope for return. Participants returned a total of 186 surveys (31%) within 15 days of the initial mailing. The PI entered these respondents into the random drawing for the DVD player held on the 16th day after the survey was mailed. The PI notified the winner by phone, and he shipped the DVD player to the address requested by the winner. After the drawing, the PI destroyed all entry cards via shredding.

The PI mailed a follow-up postcard requesting the completed survey to participants not responding within 15 days of the initial mailing. After mailing the follow-up postcard, 55 additional participants returned their surveys. The PI ended data collection on the 28th day subsequent to the initial mailing. The final return consisted of 241 surveys representing a 40% return rate. Of the returned surveys, the PI used only those participants currently employed as school counselors. This yielded a final sample of 207 current members of ASCA for this study.

Survey Instrument

The PI developed the survey instrument (Appendix A) for this study after consideration of the results of the Zimpfer (1974a) study, the Astramovich (1999) pilot

survey, and the ASCA (1999b) role statement regarding support personnel in school counseling. He worded survey items addressing duties of counseling paraprofessionals based upon language used in the ASCA (1999b) position statement and the Zimpfer (1974a) study (Fink, 1995).

To test internal consistency reliability of survey items, the PI calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Litwin, 1995) for survey items assessing support for clerical tasks, indirect helping tasks, and direct helping tasks. For purposes of this study, the PI considered an alpha coefficient from .90 to 1.00 as very high, an alpha coefficient from .70 to .89 as high, and an alpha coefficient from .50 to .69 as moderate (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998).

Items assessing support for clerical tasks included:

1. Accessing and maintaining student records
3. Appointment scheduling
5. Budgeting and purchasing supplies
7. Collecting and analyzing data
9. Database entry and management
10. Designing brochures, presentations, and forms
18. Maintaining occupational data and information
19. Making reports
20. Managing the school counseling office
21. Preparing and maintaining supplies
24. Recording minutes for group meetings

25. Standardized test administration, preparation, and maintenance

26. Supervising or monitoring work study students

These items yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.83 indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Survey items assessing support for indirect helping tasks included:

2. Administering career center tools

4. Assisting students with information gathering

11. Explaining counseling

16. Leading small groups on predetermined topics

18. Locating and making referrals to community agencies

22. Providing information about colleges, or other
post-secondary education and training

23. Putting clients at-ease

These items yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.71 indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Survey items assessing support for direct helping tasks included:

6. Classroom guidance

8. Crisis management

12. Group counseling

13. Individual counseling

14. Interviewing parents

15. Interviewing students

These items yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.87 indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The PI used two survey items to assess counselor shortages: “My school district is currently experiencing a shortage of school counselors” and “My school district currently has unfilled vacancies for school counselors”. These items yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .50 indicating a moderate level of internal consistency.

The PI used two survey items to assess support for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in respondents' schools: “A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school” and “My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional”. These items yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .86 indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The PI used two survey items to assess participants' views of the counselor-student ratios in their schools: “The counselor-student ratio at my school is adequate” and “The counselor-student ratio at my school hinders my ability to serve students”. These items yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .83 indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The PI used two survey items to assess participants' views of their available time to provide direct services to students: “The time I spend in non-direct counseling duties hinders my ability to serve students” and “I have ample time to provide direct counseling and guidance activities to students”. These items yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .67 indicating a moderate level of internal consistency.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

The sample obtained in this study consisted of 207 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) members currently working as school counselors. Participants represented all states except Arkansas and West Virginia (see Table 1).

The participants consisted of 176 (85.0%) females and 31 (15.0%) males. Occupations represented included 95 (45.9%) elementary school counselors, 54 (26.1%) middle school counselors, and 58 (28.0%) high school counselors. The school locations represented by the sample included 88 (42.5%) suburban, 63 (30.4%) rural, and 52 (25.1%) urban. Participants' highest earned degrees included 184 (88.9%) master's degrees, 14 (6.8%) education specialist degrees, 7 (3.4%) doctoral degrees, and 2 (1.0%) bachelor's degrees (Table 2).

The mean age of the participants was 43.94 years (SD 9.13), and the mean years of experience as a school counselor was 8.44 (SD 5.84). The mean annual salary of the sample was \$42,574.13 (SD 11,721.79) (Table 3).

Results

Results of this study are presented in the order the hypotheses were tested. The principal investigator (PI) established a .05 significance level for all parametric statistical

procedures as customary in educational research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The reader may refer to Table 4 for a listing of counselor-student ratios and percentages of time involved in direct counseling services as reported by participants.

Hypothesis 1: Participants' reported counselor-student ratios will exceed the ASCA recommendation of one counselor per 250 students.

The PI calculated the counselor-student ratio for the participants by dividing the reported student population by the number of counselors in each school. The mean counselor-student ratio of the participants was one counselor per 464.63 students (SD 312.19). Table 5 shows the results of a one-sample t test comparing this ratio with the ASCA recommended 1:250. Because the p value (.000) exceeded the .05 level of significance, the PI retained Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2: At least 25% of participants will indicate a shortage of counselors in their school district.

The PI used responses to two survey items to assess counselor shortages. Table 6 shows the individual and combined responses to "My school district is currently experiencing a shortage of school counselors" and "My school district currently has unfilled vacancies for school counselors". Of the participants, 30.4% either strongly agreed or agreed that their district was experiencing a school counselor shortage and/or had unfilled school counselor vacancies, while 12.3% indicated uncertainty or neutrality and 56.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because greater than 25% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed their district currently experienced a shortage of school counselors and/or had unfilled school counselor vacancies, the PI retained Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3: Participants' reported percentages of time spent daily in actual counseling and guidance activities with students will be below the ASCA recommended 70%.

The PI calculated the total percentage of time providing counseling and guidance services by summing participants' responses to daily percentage of time involving individual or group counseling and daily percentage of time providing classroom guidance. The daily mean percentage of time spent in direct counseling and guidance by the sample was 61.48% (SD 27.32). Table 7 shows the results of a one-sample t test comparing this percentage to the ASCA recommended 70%. Because the p value (.000) exceeded the .05 level of significance, the PI retained Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4: Participants' reports will show no difference between elementary, middle, and high school counselors' percentages of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students.

Table 8 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA for total percentage time involved in direct counseling and guidance with school level as the factor. Because the p value (.011) exceeded the .05 level of significance, the PI performed Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) post hoc test (Table 9). The mean difference between elementary and high school (13.71) was significant at the .05 level. Because elementary school counselors reported a significantly higher total percentage of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students than did high school counselors, the PI rejected Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5: Participants' reports will show no difference between urban, suburban, and rural school counselors' percentages of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students.

Table 10 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA for total percentage time involved in direct counseling and guidance with school location as the factor. Because the p value (.428) did not exceed the .05 level of significance, the PI retained Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 6: Participants' reports will show no difference between elementary, middle, and high school counselor-student ratios.

Table 11 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA for counselor-student ratio with school level as the factor. Because the p value (.000) exceeded the .05 level of significance, the PI performed Fisher's LSD post hoc test (Table 12). The mean difference between the elementary and middle school counselor-student ratio (194.96) was significant at the .05 level. The mean difference between the elementary and high school counselor-student ratio (246.21) was also significant at the .05 level. Because elementary school counselors reported a significantly larger counselor-student ratio than both middle school counselors and high school counselors, the PI rejected Hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 7: Participants' reports will show no difference between urban, suburban, and rural schools' counselor-student ratios.

Table 13 shows the results of a one-way ANOVA for counselor-student ratio with school location as the factor. Because the p value (.869) did not exceed the .05 level of significance, the PI retained Hypothesis 7.

Hypothesis 8: A majority of participants will support the use of counselor paraprofessionals in their schools.

The PI used responses to two survey items to assess support for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in respondents' schools. Table 14 shows the individual and combined responses to “A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school” and “My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional”. Of the participants, 59.4% strongly agreed or agreed with utilizing a counseling paraprofessional at their school, 22.9% indicated uncertainty or neutrality, and 17.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because 59.4% of the survey respondents supported utilizing a counselor paraprofessional in their school, the PI retained Hypothesis 8.

Hypothesis 9: Participants' reported time spent in direct counseling and guidance will negatively correlate with their reported attitudes toward the usefulness of a counseling paraprofessional in their school.

Table 15 shows the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation between percentage of time involved in direct counseling and guidance with students and combined responses to “A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school” and “My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional”. The negative correlation ($r = -.21$, $p = .003$) was significant at the .05 level, therefore the PI retained Hypothesis 9.

Hypothesis 10: Participants' reported counselor-student ratios will positively correlate with their responses to usefulness of a counselor paraprofessional in their school.

Table 15 shows the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation between counselor-student ratio and combined responses to “A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school” and “My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional”. The negative correlation ($r = -.01$, $p = .847$) was not significant at the .05 level, therefore the PI rejected Hypothesis 10.

Hypothesis 11: A majority of participants will endorse clerical tasks for counselor paraprofessionals.

Table 16 shows the combined responses for all 13 items assessing the assignment of clerical duties to counseling paraprofessionals. In response to assigning clerical duties to counseling paraprofessionals, 68.61% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 15.81% indicated uncertainty or neutrality, and 15.58% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because the majority of participants endorsed the assessed clerical tasks for counseling paraprofessionals, the PI retained Hypothesis 11.

Hypothesis 12: A majority of participants will endorse indirect helping tasks for counselor paraprofessionals.

Table 16 shows the combined responses for all 7 items assessing the assignment of indirect helping tasks to counseling paraprofessionals. In response to assigning indirect helping tasks to counseling paraprofessionals, 53.47% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 22.18% indicated uncertainty or neutrality, and 24.33% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because the majority of the participants endorsed the assessed indirect helping tasks for counselor paraprofessionals, the PI retained Hypothesis 11.

Hypothesis 13: A majority of participants will not endorse direct counseling and guidance tasks for counselor paraprofessionals.

Table 16 shows the combined responses for all 6 items assessing the assignment of direct helping tasks to counseling paraprofessionals. In response to assigning direct helping tasks to counseling paraprofessionals, 13.85% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed, 14.18% indicated uncertainty or neutrality, and 71.96% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Because the percentage of “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses to items assessing support for direct helping tasks exceeded 50%, the PI retained Hypothesis 12.

Discussion

In this study, the PI explored attitudes of 207 current ASCA members toward utilizing paraprofessionals in school counseling. In the following discussion, the PI summarizes results of the six research questions studied. He then discusses participants’ suggested education and training level for counseling paraprofessionals, participants’ current use of counseling paraprofessionals, and participants’ written responses.

Counselor-Student Ratio

The participants’ reported counselor-student ratio significantly exceeded ASCA (1999b) recommendations. Elementary school counselor participants reported the highest counselor-student ratio. Suburban elementary school counselors in particular reported a critically high counselor-student ratio. High school counselor participants reported the lowest counselor-student ratio although they still significantly exceeded ASCA recommendations. In a follow-up analysis, a polynomial contrast of the counselor-student

ratio showed a significant linear trend ($F = 25.19, p < .001$). Thus, counselor-student ratios decreased as school level increased.

The high reported counselor-student ratios coincided with the participants' responses to the adequacy of the counselor-student ratio at their schools. The majority of participants reported an inadequate counselor-student ratio at their schools. Furthermore the majority of participants indicated that the high counselor-student ratio hindered their ability to serve students.

School Counselor Shortages

More than one-fourth of the participants indicated a school counselor shortage in their district. However, less than one-fourth of the participants indicated their district currently had unfilled school counselor positions.

Considering the reliability of these two items was only moderate, the two questions assessing school counselor shortages probably measured different variables. Survey respondents might have interpreted shortages as indicating that not enough counselor positions were allocated in their district. This interpretation coincides with written comments made by some respondents who noted that although no unfilled school counselor vacancies existed in their districts, their districts did not have enough created positions for counselors. For example, one participant wrote, "We don't have a shortage of counselors applying for positions, but we are spread far too thinly".

In light of both quantitative and qualitative data regarding school counselor shortages, it appears likely that the single survey item "My school district is currently experiencing a shortage of school counselors" is the most valid. Whereas 30.4% of

respondents to both items combined indicated a shortage, 46.4% of respondents to “My school district is currently experiencing a shortage of school counselors” indicated a shortage. This latter percentage may better represent participants’ perceptions of school counselor shortages in their districts.

Percentage of Time in Direct Services

Participants’ reported percentage of time involved daily in direct counseling and guidance services fell significantly below ASCA recommendations. Elementary counselors reported the highest daily percentage of time involved in direct counseling and guidance services, whereas high school counselors reported the lowest. In a follow-up analysis, a polynomial contrast of the percentage of time involved in direct counseling and guidance services showed a significant linear trend ($F = 9.145, p < .01$). Thus, participants’ time in direct counseling and guidance services decreased as school level increased.

Survey participants' responses to survey items about the time they spend in direct services likewise reflected insufficient time available for counseling and guidance activities. More than two-thirds of the participants indicated a lack of time available to provide direct counseling and guidance activities to students. Furthermore, the majority of participants indicated that time spent in non-direct counseling tasks hindered their ability to serve students.

Attitudes toward Utilizing Counseling Paraprofessionals

The reported lack of time for direct counseling and guidance services, coupled with the high reported counselor-student ratios, suggested that many of the participants

could benefit from additional personnel support. As hypothesized, the majority of participants supported utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in their schools.

Of the participants, over 8% wrote comments strongly supporting the use of counseling paraprofessionals. Typical examples of these responses included "...a paraprofessional with the right training could most definitely be an asset to my particular workplace", and "If utilized appropriately, counselor paraprofessionals would greatly enhance the services school counselors are able to provide". One participant wrote, "It would be nice to have help, because it is the students who end up winning and reaping the benefits". Other comments likewise emphasized the beneficial impact on services to students and underscored the value of having a trained paraprofessional to help the school counselor.

While the PI found strong support for using paraprofessionals in school counseling, over 7% of survey participants wrote concerns and comments indicating opposition to utilizing paraprofessionals in school counseling. Concerns expressed included losing current school counselors to lower-paid and less educated paraprofessionals, lack of knowledge and experience by paraprofessionals, inadequate training and education of paraprofessionals, and negative impacts on the professional status of school counselors. One respondent wrote:

I'm aware we have shortages but I'm fearful of substitution. I think the shortages would be better served with things like more active recruitment of counseling majors at the college level, and more promotion by ACA and our state organization. I don't think we're desperate enough yet to compromise.

Another participant wrote, “These people do not have the training or the education to be counseling in schools. They flit in and out and do not know school protocol. Our district is finally getting away from this”.

It is interesting to note that the 8% who wrote favorable comments of counseling paraprofessionals came from the 59% of participants who agreed on the objective items expressing support. By contrast, the 7% who wrote negative comments came from the 17% who disagreed counseling paraprofessionals would be helpful in their schools. This finding may suggest that those who disagree with using paraprofessionals in school counseling may be a relatively smaller but more vocal group.

Relationships between Support for Counseling Paraprofessionals and Other Variables

The PI found participants’ support level for using counseling paraprofessionals increased as the amount of time they reported providing direct counseling and guidance services decreased. Thus participants’ who reported the lowest percentage of time involved in direct services endorsed utilizing counseling paraprofessionals more strongly than those participants reporting the highest percentage of time providing direct services.

The PI found no significant relationship between support for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals and counselor-student ratio. Likewise he found no significant relationship between support for utilizing counseling paraprofessionals and reported school counselor shortages.

Considering the data from this research question and the last yields some significant implications. Elementary school counselors, who reported the highest percentage of time spent in direct services to students despite the highest counselor-

student ratio, received the lowest support for using counseling paraprofessionals. Conversely, high school counselors, who reported the lowest percentage of time spent in direct services and the lowest counselor-student ratio, received the most support for using counseling paraprofessionals. The underlying reason for decreased time in direct services despite lower counselor-student ratios might be explained by the survey respondents. They indicated high school counselors have substantially more paperwork and administrative tasks as part of their routine job duties than do elementary school counselors. This factor may help to explain why participants' attitudes toward the use of paraprofessionals were related to time in direct services rather than to counselor-student ratios.

To summarize, school counselors who favor using paraprofessionals are not likely to be those who report high counselor-student ratios, nor those who perceive a school counselor shortage, but those who perceive less time spent in direct services to students. Such counselors are more likely to be at the high school level, probably because of the increased paperwork that keeps them from providing direct services, and least likely to be at the elementary level, although even at this level, a majority favored using paraprofessionals.

Duties for Counseling Paraprofessionals

While survey participants indicated a high level of support for using counseling paraprofessionals in school counseling, the PI found distinct differences in levels of support for various job duties. The PI assessed support for job duties using three main job domains: clerical tasks, indirect helping tasks, and direct helping tasks. More than two-

thirds of the participants supported assigning clerical tasks to counseling paraprofessionals. A majority of participants likewise supported assigning indirect helping tasks to counseling paraprofessionals. However, as expected, most participants strongly opposed utilizing paraprofessionals for direct helping tasks.

Table 20 shows a follow-up analysis ranking the mean scale responses for the 26 job duties assessed. Clerical tasks comprised 9 of the 10 highest supported duties for counseling paraprofessionals. The most highly endorsed clerical duties included database management, maintaining supplies, maintaining occupational data, designing brochures, and appointment scheduling. Budgeting and purchasing supplies represented the least endorsed clerical duty.

Indirect helping tasks generally fell in the middle of the task rankings. The most endorsed indirect helping duties included assisting students with information gathering, administering career center tools, and putting clients at-ease. Leading small groups represented the least endorsed indirect helping task, perhaps because counselors view group leadership to fall within the clinical domain of the professional counselor.

All of the items assessing support for direct helping tasks ranked exclusively at the bottom of the job duties. Of the direct helping tasks, interviewing students received the most endorsements. Crisis management, group counseling, and individual counseling represented the least endorsed direct helping tasks.

Education and Training for Counseling Paraprofessionals

Survey participants responded to a question assessing the minimum formal level of education and training necessary for preparing counseling paraprofessionals for

positions in school counseling. Of the participants, 38.6% indicated that a bachelor's degree plus on the job training was the minimum education necessary, 31.9% supported an associate's degree with on the job training, 11.1% endorsed some college credit certification coursework with on the job training, and 7.7% indicated a high school degree with on the job training was the minimum necessary education.

The participants strongly endorsed higher levels of academic preparation for counseling paraprofessionals. These results correspond with written comments made by 23.1% of survey participants who referenced appropriate training and education for counseling paraprofessionals. Several participants indicated that they would most trust the abilities and skills of a paraprofessional holding a bachelor's degree in a counseling related field. Many of the participants noted that the specific tasks delegated would depend on the quality of the paraprofessional's training and education. Some participants suggested specific coursework necessary to train counseling paraprofessionals including child development, child psychology, counseling theories and techniques, career development, counseling ethics, and school law.

Current Use of Counseling Paraprofessionals

Of the participants, 26 (11.6%) indicated their school currently employed an individual who performed the duties of a counseling paraprofessional. Of these, 15 were part time positions and 9 were full time. The mean annual salary reported for the part time positions was \$8,712.50 (SD 1965.70). The mean annual salary reported for the full time positions was \$17,500.00 (SD 10758.72).

Of the 26 participants currently reporting use of a paraprofessional, 63.4% strongly agreed or agreed with utilizing a counseling paraprofessional at their school, 21.1% indicated uncertainty or neutrality, and 15.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results coincide with support levels indicated by all participants. Thus participants' support did not vary with current experience utilizing a paraprofessional.

Of the participants, 3.4% wrote comments about their current use of paraprofessionals in school counseling. One participant noted, "Our counseling paraprofessional was selected based on her dedication to students and demonstrated skills in conflict management". Another survey respondent wrote:

We currently have a full time companion/mentor who works with students both individually and in small groups (after training in a student assistant program). Most of her work is academic but the personal/social/behavioral can't really be separated. I find her to be an extension of myself for students who have less serious problems. She is especially helpful for students who are not getting the parenting that they need and are 'at-risk' for this reason. She also works with small groups within the classroom; is visible in the lunchroom, hallway, etc. [She is] another adult to help students be successful.

Whereas 3.4% of the participants expressed commendation for counseling paraprofessionals, one survey member wrote a less favorable assessment of counseling paraprofessionals:

I currently work in a system [that] has funded counseling paraprofessionals titled 'intervention specialists'. My only experience has not been pleasant nor has the

addition proved helpful. Strict guidelines on training and education should be implemented that include aspects of a clearly defined job description.

Corresponding with the participants' high endorsement of clerical duties for counseling paraprofessionals, several written responses suggested an emphasis on clerical tasks. One respondent indicated, "We have a guidance assistant who performs much of our scheduling, works on testing etc., but she does not give direct service to students, parents, or teachers".

Written Responses

Of the 207 participants in this study, 81.2% wrote comments and concerns about utilizing paraprofessionals in counseling. The PI coded these responses categorically in order to explore the major themes discussed by the participants.

The education and training level of counseling paraprofessionals represented the most frequent concern discussed by participants. Although the PI addressed training in the survey, 23.2% also wrote comments emphasizing more specifically the level and type of training. Typical concerns expressed included comments such as, "Utilizing a counseling paraprofessional would all depend on their experience and qualifications", and "I would want the paraprofessional to have considerable training because of the sensitivity of counseling". Several participants indicated that a bachelor's degree in a related field would be the appropriate level of formal training. Other respondents suggested the use of an internship as part of the routine formal training for counseling paraprofessionals.

While the survey did not directly address paraprofessional training curricula, 18.4% of participants wrote concerns regarding training in ethics and legal issues, particularly confidentiality. One participant wrote, “I would be most concerned that a counseling paraprofessional would fully understand all the ethical and legal issues in the counseling profession and would have a full respect for confidentiality”. Another respondent noted, “Many times we hire [individuals] from the immediate community. You need someone who can be trusted not to gossip about families and kids in the grocery store etc.”. Likewise, other participants from this group underscored the importance of specific training for counseling paraprofessionals in confidentiality and other aspects of ethics and school law.

Of the participants, 18.4% emphasized using counseling paraprofessionals for clerical duties. One survey participant wrote, “This type [of] personnel could be...used to complete many of the clerical and administrative tasks assigned to many counselors now”. Other participants likewise emphasized the use of counseling paraprofessionals primarily for clerical duties. Some participants noted that they currently have a secretary performing many of the duties of a counseling paraprofessional. One respondent wrote, “I think counselors need a secretary and not a paraprofessional”.

A major concern expressed by 9.7% of the participants was the potential replacement of current school counselors by lower paid and less educated paraprofessionals. One participant wrote, “My primary concern would be the assumption of district personnel that a professional school counselor's duties could be performed by a paraprofessional”. Another participant indicated:

Our profession is always on the budgetary chopping block [and] our conservative school board might think that paraprofessionals could do our jobs for less money. Guidance services are misunderstood as it is [and] this could make our profession even more confusing to the public.

Several other survey members indicated similar concerns that lower paid paraprofessionals would slowly replace counselors. One sample member indicated that paraprofessionals had already taken the place of school counselors in a California school district, while another survey participant wrote that a high school in Arizona had done the same.

Of the participants, 7.2% expressed concerns that the paraprofessional might experience confusion regarding role and/or job duties. Meanwhile, 4.8% of the participants expressed fear that paraprofessionals might overstep their boundaries. Several participants indicated that counseling paraprofessionals might be mistakenly assumed to be another counselor by students and staff. One participant indicated that the boundaries and limits of the paraprofessional might confuse students. Another sample member wrote, “My concern is that many people wish to help students and many people refer to this as ‘counseling’. Many people are being given the title or position of counselor when in fact they are not properly trained.” Other participants indicated that clear job descriptions and boundaries are crucial for counseling paraprofessionals. Similarly, some participants emphasized the importance of counseling paraprofessionals knowing when a situation goes beyond their level of expertise and should be referred to the school counselor.

Other concerns expressed by participants included the lack of available physical space to house another staff member, desire to be in charge of hiring and supervising the paraprofessional, and concerns about legal liability if the school counselor is responsible for supervising the paraprofessional.

Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The sample in this study consisted of 207 current members of ASCA employed as school counselors, representing approximately 1.7% of the current ASCA population. Results of this study represent only current members of ASCA who participated. Therefore the findings may not represent attitudes of all school counselors. However, random sampling and a 40% return rate contribute to confidence regarding the degree to which results from this study represent attitudes of all ASCA school counselors and United States school counselors as a whole.

Future studies on the use of counseling paraprofessionals might include a sample of current school counselors obtained through school districts nationwide. Such a sample may help provide additional information about the attitudes of school counselors nationwide toward utilizing counseling paraprofessionals. A suggested related study might involve examining the attitudes of school administrators and directors of school guidance services toward utilizing counseling paraprofessionals. Quantitative and qualitative studies in schools currently employing counseling paraprofessionals may likewise benefit the design and implementation of counseling paraprofessional training programs. Issues explored in such studies might include attitudes of counselors, assigned

paraprofessional tasks, training, role clarity, and other issues raised by participants in the current study.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the researcher has several recommendations for school counselors, school administrators, state education agencies, and institutions of higher education regarding the training, education, and job duties of counseling paraprofessionals.

General Recommendations

1. In order for school counselors to have ample time to provide direct counseling and guidance services, state education agencies and school districts must reduce the non-direct helping duties assigned to school counselors by delegating these duties to trained counseling paraprofessionals.
2. In districts where resources are limited, or where counseling paraprofessionals are introduced into schools through a phasing-in process, high school counseling programs should take priority for receiving a counseling paraprofessional.

Training and Education Recommendations for Counseling Paraprofessionals

1. A bachelor's degree, or at minimum an associate's degree, in a counseling related field should comprise the formal education for counseling paraprofessionals.
2. State education agencies should develop and implement a standard counseling paraprofessional curriculum that leads to certification by examination.

3. Training for counseling paraprofessionals should include coursework in child psychology, human development, career development, helping skills, counseling theories, school law, and ethics with an emphasis on confidentiality.
4. Part of the formalized training of counseling paraprofessionals should involve a supervised site based internship.
5. Counselor education programs should develop, continue, or reinstate undergraduate programs designed to prepare counseling paraprofessionals.

Job Duty Recommendations for Counseling Paraprofessionals

1. Counseling paraprofessionals should work only under the direction and supervision of a school counselor at the same school site. School districts should not employ counseling paraprofessionals in lieu of a school counselor.
2. School counselors, rather than school administrators, should hire, assign duties, and supervise the counseling paraprofessional.
3. School districts must adopt clear job descriptions for counseling paraprofessionals that detail the scope and limits of their duties.
4. School districts should consistently use a job title for counseling paraprofessionals such as “guidance worker” or “guidance associate” in order to help define roles and avoid misrepresentation of counseling paraprofessionals as professional counselors.
5. Counseling paraprofessionals should generally perform clerical tasks and indirect helping tasks at the discretion of the school counselor. Counseling paraprofessionals should not perform direct counseling services.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggested some differences with Zimpfer's (1974a) previous findings regarding support for counseling paraprofessionals. Zimpfer found 87% of participants' supported introducing counseling paraprofessionals into school counseling, yet the PI for this study found 59% of participants' supported utilizing counseling paraprofessionals. Thus support levels for paraprofessionals appear to have decreased since Zimpfer's (1974a) study. Despite this decrease, a clear majority of participants remained supportive toward utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in this study.

Considering the PI's findings of elevated counselor-student ratios and counselors' reported lack of time to provide direct services, utilizing counseling paraprofessionals may help fill a critical need in the delivery of school counseling and guidance services. Ultimately, utilizing counseling paraprofessionals may enhance the quality of support services that elementary and secondary schools provide students.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

SCHOOL COUNSELOR SURVEY: Utilizing Paraprofessionals in School Counseling

**Randy Agramovich, M.Ed., Licensed Professional Counselor
University of North Texas**

Age: _____ Gender: _____ 1. Female _____ 2. Male
City: _____ State: _____

Highest Degree Earned:
_____ 1. High School _____ 2. Bachelor's _____ 3. Master's _____ 4. Doctoral

Current Occupation:
_____ 1. Elementary school counselor _____ 2. Middle / Junior High school counselor
_____ 3. High school counselor _____ 4. Counselor educator
_____ 5. Counselor supervisor _____ 6. Other: (specify) _____

Years of experience as a school counselor: _____ years

Current yearly salary: \$ _____

My school district is: _____ 1. Urban _____ 2. Suburban _____ 3. Rural

What is the current student population *at your school*? _____ students

How many FULL TIME counselors (including yourself) are currently working *at your school*? _____

If part time counselors work at your school, please indicate their time status (i.e. 50% time or 25% time etc.)

How many PART-TIME counselors are currently working at your school? _____
at _____ time

Note for the following two questions: Activities such as scheduling, hall or bus duty, substituting, administrative and clerical tasks, and coordinating standardized testing ***should not be considered*** as direct provision of individual and/or group counseling and classroom guidance.

What **percentage** of your work time is spent each day, on average, *directly providing individual and/or group counseling to students*? _____ %

What **percentage** of your work time is spent each day, on average, *providing classroom guidance*? _____ %

A **counseling paraprofessional** is a trained individual who assists school counselors in a wide variety of school counseling related tasks.

Is there currently at your school an individual who performs the duties of a counseling paraprofessional?

1. _____ Yes 2. _____ No

If you currently have a person performing the duties of a counseling paraprofessional are they: 1. _____ Full Time or 2. _____ Part Time. What is their yearly salary?

\$ _____

The minimum formal education and training for counseling paraprofessionals should include (check one):

- _____ 1. High school diploma & on the job training
- _____ 2. Some college credit certification coursework & on the job training
- _____ 3. Associates degree (2 years, 60 semester hours) & on the job training
- _____ 4. Bachelor's degree (4 years, 120 semester hours) & on the job training

Please circle your response to the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My school district currently is experiencing a shortage of school counselors.	5	4	3	2	1
A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school.	5	4	3	2	1
The counselor-student ratio at my school is adequate.	5	4	3	2	1
The time I spend in non-direct counseling duties hinders my ability to serve students.	5	4	3	2	1
My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional	5	4	3	2	1
I have ample time to provide direct counseling and guidance activities to students.	5	4	3	2	1
The counselor-student ratio at my school hinders my ability to serve students.	5	4	3	2	1
A counseling paraprofessional would allow me to spend more time in actual counseling or guidance with students.	5	4	3	2	1
My school district currently has unfilled vacancies for school counselors.	5	4	3	2	1
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the elementary school level.	5	4	3	2	1
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the middle / junior high school level.	5	4	3	2	1
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the high school level.	5	4	3	2	1

If an administrator informed you that a counseling paraprofessional had been hired, typical duties you would assign him or her would include:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Accessing and maintaining student records	5	4	3	2	1
2. Administering career center tools	5	4	3	2	1
3. Appointment scheduling	5	4	3	2	1
4. Assisting students with information gathering	5	4	3	2	1
5. Budgeting and purchasing supplies	5	4	3	2	1
6. Classroom guidance	5	4	3	2	1
7. Collecting and analyzing data	5	4	3	2	1
8. Crisis management	5	4	3	2	1
9. Database entry and management	5	4	3	2	1
10. Designing brochures, presentations, and forms	5	4	3	2	1
11. Explaining counseling	5	4	3	2	1
12. Group counseling	5	4	3	2	1
13. Individual counseling	5	4	3	2	1
14. Interviewing parents	5	4	3	2	1
15. Interviewing students	5	4	3	2	1
16. Leading small groups on predetermined topics	5	4	3	2	1
17. Locating and making referrals to community agencies	5	4	3	2	1
18. Maintaining occupational data and information	5	4	3	2	1
19. Making reports	5	4	3	2	1
20. Managing the school counseling office	5	4	3	2	1
21. Preparing and maintaining supplies	5	4	3	2	1
22. Providing information about colleges, or other post-secondary education and training	5	4	3	2	1
23. Putting clients at-ease	5	4	3	2	1
24. Recording minutes for group meetings	5	4	3	2	1
25. Standardized test administration, preparation, and maintenance	5	4	3	2	1
26. Supervising or monitoring work study students	5	4	3	2	1

Please indicate any concerns you have about utilizing counseling paraprofessionals in the school counselor's office:

Other comments:

APPENDIX B

TABLES

Table 1

Demographic Breakdown of Sample by State

State	<u>n</u>	<u>P</u>
Alaska	2	1.0
Alabama	2	1.0
Arizona	5	2.4
California	5	2.4
Colorado	2	1.0
Connecticut	2	1.0
D.C. (Washington)	1	0.5
Delaware	3	1.4
Florida	6	2.9
Georgia	12	5.8
Hawaii	2	1.0
Iowa	3	1.4
Idaho	5	2.4
Illinois	7	3.4
Indiana	2	1.0
Kansas	3	1.4
Kentucky	5	2.4
Louisiana	4	1.9

Massachusetts	4	1.9
Maryland	7	3.4
Maine	4	1.9
Michigan	8	3.9
Minnesota	4	1.9
Missouri	4	1.9
Mississippi	3	1.4
Montana	1	0.5
North Carolina	8	3.9
North Dakota	2	1.0
Nebraska	1	0.5
New Hampshire	4	1.9
New Jersey	2	1.0
New Mexico	2	1.0
Nevada	3	1.4
New York	9	4.3
Ohio	7	3.4
Oklahoma	3	1.4
Oregon	2	1.0
Pennsylvania	10	4.8
Rhode Island	1	0.5
South Carolina	6	2.9

South Dakota	2	1.0
Tennessee	4	1.9
Texas	7	3.4
Utah	3	1.4
Virginia	7	3.4
Vermont	2	1.0
Washington	8	3.9
Wisconsin	7	3.4
Wyoming	1	0.5

Table 2

Demographic Breakdown of Sample by Gender, Occupation, School Location, and

Highest Earned Degree ^a

	<u>P</u>
Gender	
Female	85.0
Male	15.0
Occupation	
Elementary school counselor	45.9
Middle school counselor	26.1
High school counselor	28.0
School location	
Suburban	42.5
Rural	30.4
Urban	25.1
Missing	1.9
Highest earned degree	
Master's	88.9
Education Specialist	6.8
Doctoral	3.4
Bachelor's	1.0

^a N = 207.

Table 3

Participants' Mean Age, Years Experience, and Salary

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Age	43.94	9.13
Years experience	8.44	5.84
Yearly Salary	42,574.13	11,721.79

Table 4

Participants' Mean Reported Counselor-Student Ratios and Percentages of Time
Involved in Direct Counseling Services

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Counselor-student ratio (total)	464.63	312.19
Elementary school (total)	593.77	393.00
Urban	561.12	483.49
Suburban	621.20	388.12
Rural	580.34	303.15
Middle school (total)	386.81	206.02
Urban	449.56	408.79
Suburban	364.78	101.51
Rural	380.00	147.58
High school (total)	337.66	122.25
Urban	373.82	123.84
Suburban	307.12	125.03
Rural	346.73	112.53
Percentage time providing		
direct counseling services (total)	61.48	27.32
Elementary school (total)	66.80	28.57
Urban	64.32	24.85

Suburban	67.95	28.63
Rural	67.40	32.67
Middle school (total)	62.90	26.13
Urban	69.30	28.85
Suburban	66.23	23.55
Rural	56.38	27.22
High school (total)	52.63	24.66
Urban	56.06	22.41
Suburban	54.63	25.93
Rural	46.70	25.30

Table 5

One-Sample T-Test of the Reported Counselor-Student Ratio and the ASCA

Recommended 1:250 Ratio

Sample Value = 464.63 (SD 312.19)

Test Value = 250

<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p (2-tailed)</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>
9.87	205	.000*	214.63

* Significant at the .05 level.

Table 6

Participants' Individual and Combined Responses to Survey Items Assessing School

Counselor Shortages

Survey Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	NR
My school district is currently experiencing a shortage of school counselors	19.8	26.6	13.0	28.5	10.6	1.4
My school district currently has unfilled vacancies for school counselors	4.8	9.7	11.6	35.3	37.7	1.0
Combined responses indicating school counselor shortages or vacancies	12.3	18.1	12.3	31.9	24.2	1.2

Note. Values represent percentages of the 207 responses. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

Table 7

One-Sample T-Test of the Reported Percentage Time in Counseling and Guidance and the ASCA Recommended 70%

Sample Value = 61.48 (SD 27.32)

Test Value = 70

<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p (2-tailed)</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>
-4.45	203	.000*	-8.52

* Significant at the .05 level.

Table 8

One-Way ANOVA for Total Percentage Time Involved in Direct Counseling and Guidance with School Level as the Factor

	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between	6630.90	2	3315.45	4.59	.011 *
Within	144904.56	201	720.92		
Total	151535.46	203			

* Significant at the .05 level.

Table 9

LSD Multiple Comparison Post Hoc Test for Total Percentage Time Involved in Direct Counseling and Guidance with School Level as the Factor

Occupation	Occupation	Mean Difference	p
Elementary	Middle school	4.14	.368
	High School	13.71	.003*
Middle school	Elementary	-4.14	.368
	High school	9.57	.063
High school	Elementary	-13.71	.003*
	Middle school	-9.57	.063

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 10

One-Way ANOVA for Total Percentage Time Involved in Direct Counseling and Guidance with School Location as the Factor

	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between	1281.06	2	640.53	.85	.428
Within	148159.15	197	752.08		
Total	149440.21	199			

Table 11

One-Way ANOVA for Counselor-Student Ratio with School Level as the Factor

	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between	2579216.3	2	1289608.17	15.05	.000*
Within	17400356.0	203	85716.04		
Total	19979572.0	205			

* Significant at the .05 level.

Table 12

LSD Multiple Comparison Post Hoc Test for Counselor-Student Ratio with School Level
as the Factor

Occupation	Occupation	Mean Difference	p
Elementary	Middle school	194.96	.000*
	High School	246.21	.000*
Middle school	Elementary	-194.96	.000*
	High school	51.24	.358
High school	Elementary	-246.21	.000*
	Middle school	-51.24	.358

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 13

One-Way ANOVA for Counselor-Student Ratio with School Location as the Factor

	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between	28111.32	2	14055.66	.14	.869
Within	19843411.0	199	99715.635		
Total	19871523.0	201			

Table 14

Participants' Individual and Combined Responses to Survey Items Assessing Support for Counseling Paraprofessionals

Survey Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	NR
A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school	22.7	41.5	21.3	9.7	4.3	0.5
My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional	5.8	14.5	24.6	30.9	23.7	0.5
Combined responses indicating support	23.2	36.2	22.9	12.1	5.0	0.5

Note. Values represent percentages of the 207 responses. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

Table 15

Correlations between Support Level for Counseling Paraprofessionals and Percentage of Time Involved in Direct Counseling and Guidance with Students and Counselor-Student Ratio

	Support Level ^a	p
Percentage time	-.21	.003 *
Counselor-student ratio	-.01	.847

* Significant at the .05 level (two-tailed).

^a Represents combined responses to "A counseling paraprofessional would be helpful at my school" and "My school does not need a counseling paraprofessional".

Table 16

Participants' Combined Responses for Items Assessing Assignment of Duties to
Counseling Paraprofessionals

Job Domain	SA	A	U	D	SD
Clerical Duties ^a	22.2	46.4	15.8	10.9	4.7
Indirect Helping Duties ^b	13.2	40.3	22.2	15.6	8.8
Direct Helping Duties ^c	1.8	12.1	14.2	35.3	36.7

Note. Values represent percentages of the cumulative responses for each job domain. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

^a n = 2625. ^b n = 1208. ^c n = 1234.

Table 17

Participants' Responses to Survey Items Assessing Counselor-Student Ratios

Survey Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	NR
The counselor-student ratio at my school is adequate	5.8	29.0	4.8	31.9	28.5	--
The counselor-student ratio at my school hinders my ability to serve students	24.6	27.5	15.0	29.5	2.9	0.5

Note. Values represent percentages of the 207 participants. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

Table 18

Participants' Responses to Survey Items Assessing Time to Provide Direct Counseling Services to Students

Survey Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	NR
I have ample time to provide direct counseling and guidance activities to students	4.3	20.8	6.8	41.1	26.6	0.5
The time I spend in non-direct counseling duties hinders my ability to serve students	32.9	29.0	10.6	21.7	5.3	0.5
A counseling paraprofessional would allow me to spend more time in actual counseling or guidance with students	23.9	42.5	22.1	9.3	1.8	--

Note. Values represent percentages of the 207 participants. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

Table 19

Participants' Responses to Items Assessing Need for Counseling Paraprofessionals at Elementary, Middle, and High School levels

Survey Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	NR
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the elementary school level	23.7	32.9	28.5	8.2	5.3	1.4
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the middle school level	26.6	37.7	23.7	6.8	4.3	1.0
Counseling paraprofessionals are needed at the high school level	29.6	36.9	23.8	4.9	4.9	0.5

Note. Values represent percentages of the 207 participants. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; U = uncertain/neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree; NR = no response.

Table 20

Rankings of the Mean Scale Responses for the 26 Job Duties Assessed

Rank	Item	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1	Database management	4.135	0.849
2	Maintaining supplies	4.104	0.765
3	Maintaining occupational data	4.023	0.830
4	Designing brochures	3.893	0.939
5	Assisting with information gathering	3.887	0.885
6	Appointment scheduling	3.794	1.140
7	Administering career center tools	3.783	1.030
8	Accessing and maintaining student records	3.756	1.169
9	Supervising work study students	3.702	0.973
10	Recording minutes for group meetings	3.607	1.115
11	Putting clients at-ease	3.582	1.001
12	Providing information about colleges	3.507	1.122
13	Standardized testing assistance	3.500	1.272
14	Managing the counseling office	3.470	1.178
15	Making reports	3.394	1.076
16	Collecting and analyzing data	3.390	1.089
17	Budgeting and purchasing supplies	3.382	1.197
18	Locating and making referrals	2.954	1.218

19	Explaining counseling	2.807	1.080
20	Leading small groups	2.482	1.132
21	Interviewing students	2.359	1.126
22	Classroom guidance	2.320	1.136
23	Interviewing parents	2.201	1.050
24	Crisis management	1.911	1.070
25	Group counseling	1.884	0.998
26	Individual counseling	1.695	0.874

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